



New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services

# HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE FACT SHEET

Common Name: **NICKEL (Dust and Fume)**

CAS Number: 7440-02-0

DOT Number: None

RTK Substance number: 1341

Date: June 1992 Revision: August 1998

## HAZARD SUMMARY

- \* **Nickel (Dust and Fume)** can affect you when breathed in.
- \* **Nickel** should be handled as a **CARCINOGEN--WITH EXTREME CAUTION**.
- \* **Nickel (Dust and Fume)** can irritate the eyes and skin.
- \* **Nickel (Dust and Fume)** may cause a skin allergy. If allergy develops, very low future exposure can cause itching and a skin rash.
- \* **Nickel (Dust and Fume)** may cause an asthma-like allergy. Future exposure can cause asthma attacks with shortness of breath, wheezing, cough, and/or chest tightness.
- \* Breathing **Nickel (Dust and Fume)** can cause a sore or hole in the "bone" (septum) dividing the inner nose.
- \* **Nickel** may damage the kidneys and may affect liver function.
- \* **Nickel powder** is **HIGHLY FLAMMABLE** and a **DANGEROUS FIRE HAZARD**.

## IDENTIFICATION

**Nickel** is a silvery-white metal, silver foil, or grey powder. It is used in electroplating and in making coins, batteries, catalysts and metal alloys such as stainless steel.

## REASON FOR CITATION

- \* **Nickel** is on the Hazardous Substance List because it is regulated by OSHA and cited by ACGIH, NIOSH, IARC, NTP, HHAG, DEP, EPA and DOT.
- \* This chemical is on the Special Health Hazard Substance List because it is a **CARCINOGEN**.
- \* Definitions are provided on page 5.

## HOW TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE BEING EXPOSED

The New Jersey Right to Know Act requires most employers to label chemicals in the workplace and requires public employers to provide their employees with information and training concerning chemical hazards and controls. The federal OSHA Hazard Communication Standard, 1910.1200, requires private employers to provide similar training and information to their employees.

- \* Exposure to hazardous substances should be routinely evaluated. This may include collecting personal and area air samples. You can obtain copies of sampling results from your employer. You have a legal right to this information under OSHA 1910.20.
- \* If you think you are experiencing any work-related health problems, see a doctor trained to recognize occupational diseases. Take this Fact Sheet with you.

## WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS

OSHA: The legal airborne permissible exposure limit (PEL) is **1 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** averaged over an 8-hour workshift.

NIOSH: The recommended airborne exposure limit is **0.015 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** averaged over a 10-hour workshift.

ACGIH: The recommended airborne exposure limit is **1.5 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** averaged over an 8-hour workshift.

- \* **Nickel** may be a **CARCINOGEN** in humans. There may be no safe level of exposure to a carcinogen, so all contact should be reduced to the lowest possible level.

## WAYS OF REDUCING EXPOSURE

- \* Enclose operations and use local exhaust ventilation at the site of chemical release. If local exhaust ventilation or enclosure is not used, respirators should be worn.
- \* Wear protective work clothing.
- \* Wash thoroughly immediately after exposure to **Nickel**.
- \* Post hazard and warning information in the work area. In addition, as part of an ongoing education and training effort, communicate all information on the health and safety hazards of **Nickel** to potentially exposed workers.

This Fact Sheet is a summary source of information of all potential and most severe health hazards that may result from exposure. Duration of exposure, concentration of the substance and other factors will affect your susceptibility to any of the potential effects described below.

Metal, metal compounds and alloys are often used in “hot” operations in the workplace. These may include, but are not limited to, welding, brazing, soldering, plating, cutting, and metallizing. At the high temperatures reached in these operations, metals often form metal fumes which have different health effects and exposure standards than the original metal or metal compound and require specialized controls. Your workplace can be evaluated for the presence of particular fumes which may be generated. Consult the appropriate New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Hazardous Substance Fact Sheets.

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## HEALTH HAZARD INFORMATION

### Acute Health Effects

The following acute (short-term) health effects may occur immediately or shortly after exposure to **Nickel**:

- \* **Nickel (Dust and Fume)** can irritate the eyes and skin.

### Chronic Health Effects

The following chronic (long-term) health effects can occur at some time after exposure to **Nickel** and can last for months or years:

### Cancer Hazard

- \* **Nickel** may be a CARCINOGEN in humans since it has been shown to cause lung cancer in animals.
- \* Occupational exposure to **Nickel** refinery dust, which contains *Nickel Subsulfide*, is associated with lung cancer.
- \* Many scientists believe there is no safe level of exposure to a carcinogen.

### Reproductive Hazard

- \* There is no evidence that **Nickel** affects reproduction. This is based on test results presently available to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services from published studies.

### Other Long-Term Effects

- \* **Nickel (Dust and Fume)** may cause a skin allergy. If allergy develops, very low future exposure can cause itching and a skin rash.
- \* **Nickel (Dust and Fume)** may cause an asthma-like allergy. Future exposure can cause asthma attacks with shortness of breath, wheezing, cough, and/or chest tightness.
- \* Breathing **Nickel (Dust and Fume)** can cause a sore or hole in the “bone” (septum) dividing the inner nose.
- \* **Nickel** may damage the kidneys and may affect liver function.

## MEDICAL

### Medical Testing

Before beginning employment and at regular times after that, the following are recommended:

- \* Urine or plasma test for **Nickel** (unexposed persons have urine levels less than **10 micrograms/liter**).

If symptoms develop or overexposure is suspected, the following may be useful:

- \* Daily urine **Nickel** for several days (persons with urine **Nickel** over **100 micrograms/liter** need medical attention).
- \* Evaluation by a qualified allergist, including careful exposure history and special testing, may help diagnose skin allergy.
- \* Lung function tests. These may be normal if the person is not having an attack at the time of the test.
- \* Kidney and liver function tests.

Any evaluation should include a careful history of past and present symptoms with an exam. Medical tests that look for damage already done are not a substitute for controlling exposure.

Request copies of your medical testing. You have a legal right to this information under OSHA 1910.20.

### Mixed Exposures

- \* Because smoking can cause heart disease, as well as lung cancer, emphysema, and other respiratory problems, it may worsen respiratory conditions caused by chemical exposure. Even if you have smoked for a long time, stopping now will reduce your risk of developing health problems.

### Conditions Made Worse By Exposure

- \* Persons who are allergic to **Nickel** may also react to *Nickel-coated* jewelry, watchbands and, sometimes, to prolonged contact with keys, coins, etc.

## WORKPLACE CONTROLS AND PRACTICES

Unless a less toxic chemical can be substituted for a hazardous substance, **ENGINEERING CONTROLS** are the most effective way of reducing exposure. The best protection is to enclose operations and/or provide local exhaust ventilation at the site of chemical release. Isolating operations can also reduce exposure. Using respirators or protective equipment is less effective than the controls mentioned above, but is sometimes necessary.

In evaluating the controls present in your workplace, consider: (1) how hazardous the substance is, (2) how much of the substance is released into the workplace and (3) whether harmful skin or eye contact could occur. Special controls should be in place for highly toxic chemicals or when significant skin, eye, or breathing exposures are possible.

In addition, the following controls are recommended:

- \* Where possible, automatically transfer **Nickel** from drums or other storage containers to process containers.
- \* A Class I, Type B, biological safety hood should be used when mixing, handling, or preparing **Nickel**.
- \* Work surfaces should be cleaned thoroughly on a routine basis.

Good **WORK PRACTICES** can help to reduce hazardous exposures. The following work practices are recommended:

- \* Workers whose clothing has been contaminated by **Nickel** should change into clean clothing promptly.
- \* Do not take contaminated work clothes home. Family members could be exposed.
- \* Contaminated work clothes should be laundered by individuals who have been informed of the hazards of exposure to **Nickel**.
- \* Eye wash fountains should be provided in the immediate work area for emergency use.
- \* If there is the possibility of skin exposure, emergency shower facilities should be provided.
- \* On skin contact with **Nickel**, immediately wash or shower to remove the chemical.
- \* Do not eat, smoke, or drink where **Nickel** is handled, processed, or stored, since the chemical can be swallowed. Wash hands carefully before eating or smoking.
- \* Use a vacuum or a wet method to reduce dust during clean-up. **DO NOT DRY SWEEP**.
- \* When vacuuming, a high efficiency particulate absolute (HEPA) filter should be used, not a standard shop vacuum.

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

WORKPLACE CONTROLS ARE BETTER THAN PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT. However, for some jobs (such as outside work, confined space entry, jobs done only once in a while, or jobs done while workplace controls are being installed), personal protective equipment may be appropriate.

OSHA 1910.132 requires employers to determine the appropriate personal protective equipment for each hazard and to train employees on how and when to use protective equipment.

The following recommendations are only guidelines and may not apply to every situation.

## Clothing

- \* Avoid skin contact with **Nickel (Dust and Fume)**. Wear protective gloves and clothing. Safety equipment suppliers/manufacturers can provide recommendations on the most protective glove/clothing material for your operation.
- \* All protective clothing (suits, gloves, footwear, headgear) should be clean, available each day, and put on before work.

## Eye Protection

- \* Wear dust-proof goggles and face shield when working with powders or dust, unless full facepiece respiratory protection is worn.

## Respiratory Protection

**IMPROPER USE OF RESPIRATORS IS DANGEROUS.** Such equipment should only be used if the employer has a written program that takes into account workplace conditions, requirements for worker training, respirator fit testing and medical exams, as described in OSHA 1910.134.

- \* Where the potential exists for exposure over **0.015 mg/m<sup>3</sup>**, use a MSHA/NIOSH approved supplied-air respirator with a full facepiece operated in a pressure-demand or other positive-pressure mode. For increased protection use in combination with an auxiliary self-contained breathing apparatus operated in pressure-demand or other positive pressure mode.
- \* Exposure to **10 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** is immediately dangerous to life and health. If the possibility of exposure above **10 mg/m<sup>3</sup>** exists, use a MSHA/NIOSH approved self-contained breathing apparatus with a full facepiece operated in a pressure-demand or other positive-pressure mode.

## HANDLING AND STORAGE

- \* Prior to working with **Nickel** you should be trained on its proper handling and storage.
- \* **Nickel** in *powder* or *foil* form is not compatible with STRONG ACIDS, (such as HYDROCHLORIC, SULFURIC and NITRIC); OXIDIZERS (such as PERCHLORATES, PEROXIDES, PERMANGANATES, CHLORATES and NITRATES); SULFUR; or COMBUSTIBLES.
- \* **Nickel** in *powder* or *foil* form may react violently with TITANIUM, AMMONIUM NITRATE, HYDRAZOIC ACID, SELENIUM, PERFORMIC ACID, and FLUORINE.
- \* Store in tightly closed containers in a cool, well-ventilated area.
- \* Sources of ignition, such as smoking and open flames, are prohibited where **Nickel powder** is used, handled, or stored in a manner that could create a potential fire or explosion hazard.
- \* Wherever **Nickel powder** is used, handled, manufactured, or stored, use explosion-proof electrical equipment.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q: If I have acute health effects, will I later get chronic health effects?
- A: Not always. Most chronic (long-term) effects result from repeated exposures to a chemical.
- Q: Can I get long-term effects without ever having short-term effects?
- A: Yes, because long-term effects can occur from repeated exposures to a chemical at levels not high enough to make you immediately sick.
- Q: What are my chances of getting sick when I have been exposed to chemicals?
- A: The likelihood of becoming sick from chemicals is increased as the amount of exposure increases. This is determined by the length of time and the amount of material to which someone is exposed.
- Q: When are higher exposures more likely?
- A: Conditions which increase risk of exposure include dust releasing operations (grinding, mixing, blasting, dumping, etc.), other physical and mechanical processes (heating, pouring, spraying, spills and evaporation from large surface areas such as open containers), and "confined space" exposures (working inside vats, reactors, boilers, small rooms, etc.).
- Q: Is the risk of getting sick higher for workers than for community residents?
- A: Yes. Exposures in the community, except possibly in cases of fires or spills, are usually much lower than those found in the workplace. However, people in the community may be exposed to contaminated water as well as to chemicals in the air over long periods. Because of this, and because of exposure of children or people who are already ill, community exposures may cause health problems.
- Q: Don't all chemicals cause cancer?
- A: No. Most chemicals tested by scientists are not cancer-causing.
- Q: Should I be concerned if a chemical causes cancer in animals?
- A: Yes. Most scientists agree that a chemical that causes cancer in animals should be treated as a suspected human carcinogen unless proven otherwise.
- Q: But don't they test animals using much higher levels of a chemical than people usually are exposed to?
- A: Yes. That's so effects can be seen more clearly using fewer animals. But high doses alone don't cause cancer unless it's a cancer agent. In fact, a chemical that causes cancer in animals at high doses could cause cancer in humans exposed to low doses.

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The following information is available from:

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services  
Occupational Disease and Injury Services  
PO Box 360  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360  
(609) 984-1863  
(609) 292-5677 (fax)

Web address: <http://www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/odisweb/>

### **Industrial Hygiene Information**

Industrial hygienists are available to answer your questions regarding the control of chemical exposures using exhaust ventilation, special work practices, good housekeeping, good hygiene practices, and personal protective equipment including respirators. In addition, they can help to interpret the results of industrial hygiene survey data.

### **Medical Evaluation**

If you think you are becoming sick because of exposure to chemicals at your workplace, you may call personnel at the Department of Health and Senior Services, Occupational Disease and Injury Services, who can help you find the information you need.

### **Public Presentations**

Presentations and educational programs on occupational health or the Right to Know Act can be organized for labor unions, trade associations and other groups.

### **Right to Know Information Resources**

The Right to Know Infoline (609) 984-2202 can answer questions about the identity and potential health effects of chemicals, list of educational materials in occupational health, references used to prepare the Fact Sheets, preparation of the Right to Know survey, education and training programs, labeling requirements, and general information regarding the Right to Know Act. Violations of the law should be reported to (609) 984-2202.

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## DEFINITIONS

**ACGIH** is the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists. It recommends upper limits (called TLVs) for exposure to workplace chemicals.

A **carcinogen** is a substance that causes cancer.

The **CAS number** is assigned by the Chemical Abstracts Service to identify a specific chemical.

A **combustible** substance is a solid, liquid or gas that will burn.

A **corrosive** substance is a gas, liquid or solid that causes irreversible damage to human tissue or containers.

**DEP** is the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

**DOT** is the Department of Transportation, the federal agency that regulates the transportation of chemicals.

**EPA** is the Environmental Protection Agency, the federal agency responsible for regulating environmental hazards.

A **fetus** is an unborn human or animal.

A **flammable** substance is a solid, liquid, vapor or gas that will ignite easily and burn rapidly.

The **flash point** is the temperature at which a liquid or solid gives off vapor that can form a flammable mixture with air.

**HHAG** is the Human Health Assessment Group of the federal EPA.

**IARC** is the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a scientific group that classifies chemicals according to their cancer-causing potential.

A **miscible** substance is a liquid or gas that will evenly dissolve in another.

**mg/m<sup>3</sup>** means milligrams of a chemical in a cubic meter of air. It is a measure of concentration (weight/volume).

**MSHA** is the Mine Safety and Health Administration, the federal agency that regulates mining. It also evaluates and approves respirators.

A **mutagen** is a substance that causes mutations. A **mutation** is a change in the genetic material in a body cell. Mutations can lead to birth defects, miscarriages, or cancer.

**NAERG** is the North American Emergency Response Guidebook. It was jointly developed by Transport Canada, the United States Department of Transportation and the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation of Mexico. It is a guide for first responders to quickly identify the specific or generic hazards of material involved in a transportation incident, and to protect themselves and the general public during the initial response phase of the incident.

**NCI** is the National Cancer Institute, a federal agency that determines the cancer-causing potential of chemicals.

**NFPA** is the National Fire Protection Association. It classifies substances according to their fire and explosion hazard.

**NIOSH** is the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. It tests equipment, evaluates and approves respirators, conducts studies of workplace hazards, and proposes standards to OSHA.

**NTP** is the National Toxicology Program which tests chemicals and reviews evidence for cancer.

**OSHA** is the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which adopts and enforces health and safety standards.

**PEOSHA** is the Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Act, a state law which sets PELs for New Jersey public employees.

**ppm** means parts of a substance per million parts of air. It is a measure of concentration by volume in air.

A **reactive** substance is a solid, liquid or gas that releases energy under certain conditions.

A **teratogen** is a substance that causes birth defects by damaging the fetus.

**TLV** is the Threshold Limit Value, the workplace exposure limit recommended by ACGIH.

The **vapor pressure** is a measure of how readily a liquid or a solid mixes with air at its surface. A higher vapor pressure indicates a higher concentration of the substance in air and therefore increases the likelihood of breathing it in.

- \* Evacuate persons not wearing protective equipment from area of spill or leak until clean-up is complete.
- \* Remove all ignition sources.
- \* Ventilate area of spill or leak after clean-up is complete.
- \* Collect powdered material in the most convenient and safe manner and deposit in sealed containers.
- \* Keep **Nickel powder** out of a confined space, such as a sewer, because of the possibility of an explosion, unless the sewer is designed to prevent the build-up of explosive concentrations.
- \* It may be necessary to contain and dispose of **Nickel** as a HAZARDOUS WASTE. Contact your Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) or your regional office of the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for specific recommendations.
- \* If employees are required to clean-up spills, they must be properly trained and equipped. OSHA 1910.120(q) may be applicable.